



An award-winning filmmaker recently gave Idaho Falls a sneak preview of his film analyzing risks and benefits of numerous energy sources. It presents insights of myriad opinion leaders including INL's director.

## New energy documentary debuts to INL community

by [Nicole Stricker](#), *INL Communications & Governmental Affairs*

Gary Jobson's timing couldn't have been better. Just as conversations about energy sources intensify, especially in light of the recent nuclear energy crisis in Japan, Jobson is debuting a thoughtful documentary about energy choices.

He recently gave the Idaho Falls community a sneak preview. "[Energy on Trial](#)" analyzes the risks and benefits of numerous energy sources and presents the insights of opinion leaders from academia, industry, government and nonprofit groups. Included among them is Idaho National Laboratory Director John Grossenbacher.

Jobson said he wanted the INL community to be among the first to screen the film because the lab was so accommodating to the film crew and because of the community's collective scientific knowledge. After the screening, Jobson and Grossenbacher participated in a question-and-answer session with the audience. It included discussion of how opinions about nuclear energy may change in the wake of the Japanese reactor crisis.

"The situation is very serious — of Japan's 55 reactors, 11 shut down and three got the double whammy of the earthquake and tsunami," Grossenbacher said. "The technology is being tested by serious blows, and so far, public health and safety has been protected.

"We will see how the technology stands the test and how we stand the test," he continued. "I hope we as a nation analyze the facts carefully, critically and responsibly and don't respond with hysteria and hype."

Jobson's final cut of the film will include new footage with perspectives on the crisis triggered by Japan's catastrophic earthquake and tsunami.



***Emmy-winning television producer and commentator Gary Jobson has produced more than 70 TV programs for ESPN, PBS and NBC.***



***INL Director John Grossenbacher, left, was one of 26 experts interviewed in the film. Others included leaders from academia, industry, government and nonprofit groups.***

generate the same amount of electricity.

The film presents an analysis of the facts surrounding all energy forms. The Emmy-winning television producer and commentator has produced more than 70 TV programs for ESPN, PBS and NBC. For "Energy on Trial," he interviewed 36 experts, shot 200 hours of footage and visited two nuclear power plants. He also spent two days filming at INL.

The documentary takes a critical look at numerous energy sources. It weighs the costs, benefits and environmental impacts of fossil, renewable and nuclear energy forms. For example, coal, oil and natural gas are abundant and inexpensive. But coal emits 50 percent of the nation's airborne pollutants and oil drilling has resulted in more than 30 major spills since 1967, the film says. The documentary also considers the benefits and limitations of renewable energy forms such as hydro, wind and solar.

It describes nuclear energy as a resource capable of powering half a million people for years using material measured in ounces. It says the nuclear fuel needed to power all of Manhattan could fit into a single Hell's Kitchen kitchen, but it would take a line of windmills stretching 25,000 miles to

Nearly half the film is dedicated to exploring the complex technical and political questions surrounding nuclear energy, safety, waste and proliferation.

"To maintain leadership in terms of nuclear nonproliferation and safety, the U.S. needs to lead and not follow," Deputy Energy Secretary Daniel Poneman said in the film. "It's kind of hard to tell others what to do when you're a shrinking violet yourself."

The film also included perspectives from [Whole Earth Catalog](#) editor Stewart Brand, former U.S. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, [Pew Center on Global Climate Change](#) Chair Theodore Roosevelt IV, former EPA administrator Christine Todd Whitman, and numerous scientists, activists, regulators and energy company CEOs.

Jobson said he is entering the documentary in every U.S. film festival he can and it has already been accepted at more than two dozen. He's also scheduled six advance showings in March, including one with PBS and another with media mogul Ted Turner and Constellation Energy's Nuclear Group President and CEO Mike Wallace, who were both interviewed in the film.

Jobson's previous projects focused on education and health care. He said a bout with lymphoma in 2003 inspired a resolve to focus his efforts on "projects meaningful for people and for America."

"A friend said, 'You should take on energy — nobody realizes where their energy comes from,'" Jobson told the Idaho Falls audience. "Energy is complicated for a lot of people: wind, solar, natural gas, nuclear, coal. The answer's pretty simple: We need them all. But there's always some kind of hysteria around each form."



*An audience Q&A included discussion of how opinions about nuclear energy may change in the wake of the Japanese reactor crisis.*

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